

**In the Claims**

**1. (Currently Amended)** A method comprising:

transmitting a query with a computing device in a domain;

receiving, with the computing device, a response to the query from one or more neighbor-casting (NC) groups in the domain each including one or more said computing devices;

applying, with the computing device, a predetermined criteria to select one said NC group; ~~and~~

joining the computing device to the selected NC ~~group~~ group; and

when a length of time between a subsequent query from the computing device and other computing devices in the selected NC group exceeds a predetermined threshold:

removing the computing device from the initial NC group; and

joining the computing device to a different NC group.

**2. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein the predetermined criteria is selected from the group consisting of:

the number of said computing devices in the selected NC group;

a length of time between the query and the response from the selected NC group; and

a combination of the foregoing.

1     **3. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein each said NC group  
2     has an identifier that is unique to other said NC groups in the domain.

3  
4     **4. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein each said computing  
5     device is selected from among a video game console, a set top box, an automatic  
6     teller machine, a Personal Digital Assistance (PDA), a Personal Computer (PC), a  
7     cellular telephone, a printer, a facsimile machine, a copier, a multifunction  
8     peripheral device, and a server.

9  
10    **5. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein each said response  
11    to the query is transmitted by one said computing device in a respective said NC  
12    group.

13  
14    **6. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein the query is  
15    transmitted over a TCP network with a broadcast or multicast.

16  
17    **7. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein the predetermined  
18    criteria to select one said NC group ignores each said response from any said NC  
19    group for which the length of time between the query and the response exceeds a  
20    predetermined maximum.

21  
22    **8. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein:  
23       each said response includes the number of computing devices in the  
24       responding said NC group; and  
25

1 the predetermined criteria to select one said NC group ignores any said NC  
2 group for which the response includes the number of computing devices in the  
3 responding said NC group that exceeds a predetermined maximum.  
4

5 **9. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 8, wherein each said response  
6 includes an identifier that is unique to the responding said NC group in the  
7 domain.  
8

9 **10. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein one or more of the  
10 transmitting, the receiving, the applying, and the joining are executed by a  
11 component of an operating system of the computing device that is joined to the  
12 selected NC group.  
13

14 **11. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 10, wherein each of the  
15 transmitting, the receiving, the applying, and the joining are executed by the  
16 operating system of the computing device joined to the selected NC group.  
17

18 **12. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein one or more of the  
19 transmitting, the receiving, the applying, and the joining are executed by an  
20 application that is running on the computing device joined to the selected NC  
21 group.  
22

23 **13. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein the applying further  
24 comprises determining at least one of:  
25

1 a closest said NC group for which the corresponding response was first to  
2 be received; and

3 a smallest said NC group that has the least number of the computing  
4 devices from among those said NC groups for which the response was received.  
5

6 **14. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 13, wherein the applying  
7 further comprises selecting the one said NC group to be the smallest said NC  
8 group when the closest said NC group is more than one said NC group.  
9

10 **15. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein the applying further  
11 comprises ordering said NC groups for which a corresponding said response was  
12 received according to:

13 the length of time between the query and the corresponding response;  
14 and  
15 a number that quantifies the computing devices in the corresponding NC  
16 group as is contained in the corresponding response.  
17

18 **16. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 15, wherein:

19 the predetermined criteria to select one said NC group ignores each said  
20 response from any said NC group for which the length of time between the query  
21 and the response exceeds a predetermined maximum; and

22 the selected NC group is selected by a condition that is selected from the  
23 group consisting of:  
24  
25

1           the length of time between the query and the corresponding response  
2 is least;

3           the number of said computing devices contained in the  
4 corresponding response is least; and

5           the number of members contained in the corresponding response is  
6 least when more than one said NC group had the least length of time between the  
7 query and the corresponding response.

8  
9 **17. (Original)** A computer-readable medium comprising instructions that,  
10 when executed by a computer, performs the method of Claim 1.

11  
12 **18. (Currently Amended)** A method comprising:

13           transmitting a query with an initial computing device in a domain, wherein  
14 the initial computing device is in an initial NC group that contains a number of  
15 ~~said~~ computing devices that are also in the domain, ~~and wherein the number is less~~  
16 ~~than a predetermined threshold;~~

17           receiving, with the initial computing device, a response to the query from  
18 one or more ~~said~~ NC groups in the domain each including one or more ~~said~~  
19 computing devices;

20           if a latency in response times between the initial computing device and  
21 other computing devices within the initial NC group is unacceptable, then:

22           applying, with the computing device, predetermined criteria to select  
23 one of the one or more ~~said~~ NC ~~group~~ groups;

1 removing the initial computing device from the initial NC group;  
2 and

3 joining the initial computing device to the selected NC group,  
4 wherein computing devices within the selected NC group have a latency in  
5 response time with the initial computing device that is acceptable.  
6

7 **19. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein the predetermined  
8 criteria to select the one said NC group is selected from the group consisting of:

9 the number of said computing devices in the selected NC group;  
10 a length of time between the query and the response from the selected NC  
11 group; and  
12 a combination of the foregoing.  
13

14 **20. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein each said NC  
15 group has an identifier that is unique to other said NC groups in the domain.  
16

17 **21. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein each said  
18 computing device is selected from among a video game console, a set top box, an  
19 automatic teller machine, a PDA, a PC, a cellular telephone, a printer, a facsimile  
20 machine, a copier, a multifunction peripheral device, and a server.  
21

22 **22. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein each said response  
23 to the query is transmitted by one said computing device in a respective said NC  
24 group.  
25

1  
2 **23. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein the query is  
3 transmitted over a TCP network with a broadcast or multicast.  
4

5 **24. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein the predetermined  
6 criteria to select one said NC group ignores each said response from any said NC  
7 group for which the length of time between the query and the response exceeds a  
8 predetermined maximum.  
9

10 **25. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein:

11 each said response includes the number of computing devices in the  
12 responding said NC group; and

13 the predetermined criteria to select one said NC group ignores any said NC  
14 group for which the response includes the number of computing devices in the  
15 responding said NC group that exceeds a predetermined maximum.  
16

17 **26. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 25, wherein each said response  
18 includes an identifier that is unique to the responding said NC group in the  
19 domain.  
20

21 **27. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein one or more of the  
22 transmitting, the receiving, the applying, and the joining are executed by a  
23 component of an operating system of the initial computing device.  
24  
25

1 **28. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 27, wherein each of the  
2 transmitting, the receiving, the applying, and the joining are executed by the  
3 operating system of the initial computing device.

4  
5 **29. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein one or more of the  
6 transmitting, the receiving, the applying, and the joining are executed by an  
7 application that is running on the initial computing device.

8  
9 **30. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein the applying  
10 further comprises determining at least one of:

11 a closest said NC group for which the corresponding response was first to  
12 be received; and

13 a smallest said NC group that has the least number of the computing  
14 devices from among those said NC groups for which the response was received.

15  
16 **31. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 30, wherein the applying  
17 further comprises selecting the one said NC group to be the smallest said NC  
18 group when the closest said NC group is more than one said NC group.

19  
20 **32. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 18, wherein the applying  
21 further comprises ordering said NC groups for which a corresponding said  
22 response was received according to:

23 the length of time between the query and the corresponding response;  
24 and



1 a number quantifying the computing devices in the corresponding NC  
2 group as is contained in the corresponding response.

3  
4 **33. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 32, wherein:

5 the predetermined criteria to select one said NC group ignores each said  
6 response from any said NC group for which the length of time between the query  
7 and the response exceeds a predetermined maximum; and

8 the selected NC group is selected by a condition that is selected from the  
9 group consisting of:

10 the length of time between the query and the corresponding response  
11 is least; a number of said computing devices in the corresponding NC group as  
12 contained in the corresponding response is least; and

13 the number of members contained in the corresponding response is  
14 least when more than one said NC group had the least length of time between the  
15 query and the corresponding response.

16  
17 **34. (Original)** A computer-readable medium comprising instructions that,  
18 when executed by a computer, performs the method of Claim 18.

19  
20 **35. (Original)** A method comprising:

21 transmitting a query with an initial computing device in a domain, wherein  
22 the computing device is in an initial NC group that contains a number of said  
23 computing devices in the domain;

1 receiving with the initial computing device a group response to the query  
2 from one or more related said computing device that are in the initial NC group;  
3 and;

4 when a length of time between the query and each said group response  
5 exceeds a predetermined threshold, removing the initial computing device from  
6 the initial NC group.

7  
8 **36. (Currently Amended)** The method as defined in Claim 35, wherein [[the]]  
9 removing the initial computing device from the initial NC group is done according  
10 to a predetermined criteria [[is]] which includes a length of time between the  
11 query and the group response.

12  
13 **37. (Original)** A computer-readable medium comprising instructions that,  
14 when executed by a computer, performs the method of Claim 35.

15  
16 **38. (Currently Amended)** A method comprising:

17 transmitting a query with an initial computing device in a domain, wherein  
18 the initial computing device is in an initial NC group that contains a number of  
19 ~~said~~ computing devices in the domain;

20 receiving with the initial computing device:

21 a group response to the query from one or more related ~~said~~  
22 computing ~~device~~ devices that are in the initial NC group; and

23 an other group response to the query from one or more NC groups in  
24 the domain each including one or more ~~said~~ computing ~~devices;~~ \* devices;

1           when a length of time between the query and each said group response  
2 exceeds a predetermined threshold:

3                 applying, with the initial computing device, a predetermined criteria  
4 to select one said NC group other than the initial NC group, wherein the  
5 predetermined criteria is selected from the group consisting of:

6                         the number of said computing devices in the selected NC  
7 group;

8                         a length of time between the query and the other group  
9 response from the selected NC group; and

10                        a combination of the foregoing;

11                 removing the initial computing device from the initial NC group; and

12                 joining the initial computing device to the selected NC group; and

13                 updating software on computing devices in the selected NC group, wherein  
14 the updating comprises deploying software, uninstalling software and providing  
15 security patches to installed software, and wherein the software updating includes  
16 setting the predetermined criteria to locate computing devices within the selected  
17 NC group according to backup needs of computing devices within the NC group.

18  
19 **39. (Original)** The method as defined in Claim 38, wherein:

20                 the predetermined criteria to select one said NC group ignores each said  
21 other group response from any said NC group for which the length of time  
22 between the query and the other group response exceeds a predetermined  
23 maximum; and  
24  
25

1           the selected NC group is selected by a condition that is selected from the  
2 group consisting of:

3                 the length of time between the query and the corresponding other  
4 group response is least; or

5                 a number of said computing devices in the corresponding NC group  
6 as in contained in the corresponding other group response is least; and

7                 the number of members as contained in the corresponding other  
8 group response is least when more than one said NC group had the least length of  
9 time between the query and the corresponding other group response.

10  
11 **40. (Original)** A computer-readable medium comprising instructions that,  
12 when executed by a computer, performs the method of Claim 38.